

Affordable Housing Minutes
January 4, 2017

Affordable Housing Trust Members Present: Sarah Rhatigan, Chair, Shirley Dolins, Susan Haber, Hugh Jones, Ken Newberg, Michael Price

Affordable Housing Trust Members Absent: Doug Gillespie, Thomas Timko

Guests: Peter Endicott, R. Anthony "Tony" Nolan, James F. "Tack" Chace, Jack Heine

Documents: Draft December 12, 2016 minutes
Published Agenda
Joint HP/HT Committee Letter dated November 16, 2016 regarding 104 B.P.R

Public Comment:

There were no public comments.

Agenda Items:

I. 104 Boston Post Road - Discuss comments to Site Eligibility Letter

The Board of Selectmen requested comments by January 12th, 2017 from the Weston Affordable Housing Trust ("HT") relating to 104 Boston Post Road's ("104 BPR") 40B Site Eligibility Application to MassHousing.

On background, the Trust discussed the status of 104 BPR, its current hurdles and the recent site walk. Sarah Rhatigan, Jack Heine, and Ken Newberg attended the site walk and learned that there were unresolved wetland and Rivers Protection Act setback issues that need to be addressed between the developer and the Commonwealth. If the size of the development was reduced, some of the concerns, including the setback concerns could be addressed. There are also significant traffic concerns with a traffic study outstanding. Among other traffic challenges, to prevent bottlenecking at 104 BPR's exit, all traffic may need to turn right onto the Route 128 interchange in order to drive west into Weston.

Generally, the HT is supportive of the 104 BPR project concept assuming satisfactory resolution of previously identified concerns. It was noted that the Board of Selectmen ("BoS") has expressed reservations concerning the 104 BPR project. The BoS's concern that 104 BPR could harm the viability of the Boston Properties proposal was discussed. Many members expressed a concern relating to the significant access and political issues presented by the Boston Properties proposal and expressed a view that 104 BPR has the better chance of actually being built to serve our local housing needs.

The Trust agreed to submit the Joint Committee letter dated November 16, 2016 with an updated cover letter drafted by the Chair. The cover letter would additionally request the 104 BPR developer to consider adding Workforce Housing. The Trust discussed hosting a public information session with the 104 BPR developer. Members were also to reach out to BoS members to understand better their opposition to 104 BPR.

VOTE TAKEN: The Housing Trust unanimously voted to authorize the Chair to draft and submit to the BoS a comments letter, consistent with the additions discussed, primarily referencing the previously drafted conditional support letter.

II. Weston Affordable Housing Foundation, Inc. (WAHFI) presentation and discussion

Peter Endicott, President and Treasurer, and R. Anthony Nolan, Secretary and Clerk, of the Weston Affordable Housing Foundation, Inc. (WAHFI) (1) presented some background information on their entity for the newer members of the Trust, (2) gave an update on their current activities and (3) began a discussion with the Trust relating to the two group's interrelated charges and how each entity can best contribute toward increasing affordable housing in Weston.

WAHFI currently owns and manages six affordable housing units and had recently been gifted two more lots to develop. Peter came to the Trust because there was a sense that the Trust and WAHFI may be duplicating efforts. WAHFI wants to focus on developing affordable units and is less interested in continuing the post-development management, support and compliance obligations inherent in affordable housing operations. Currently, WAHFI has a part-time staff person for property management and is satisfying its compliance obligations, primarily income certification, with volunteer efforts in-house and help from the MetroWest Collaborative Development.

Those compliance obligations, which were noted as being significant, are currently handled by the Brook School staff for the Weston-owned properties. The Brook School staff expanded its management portfolio from exclusively Brook School apartments after the Warren Avenue apartments came online. Jack Heine confirmed that there should be sufficient capacity for an additional six units from the Brook School management and compliance assets.

The Trust agreed that it would be a wise ultimate goal for the town, through the Trust, to have the WAHFI developed units transferred to the Trust giving WAHFI the ability to fully focus on development work. In the short term, WAHFI would be looking to the Brook School for income recertification assistance. In the medium term, WAHFI would like to receive property management support from the Brook School with the Trust ultimately taking possession of those properties.

III. Discuss Community Preservation Act (CPA) Funding Request

The Trust continued its discussion of various strategies and approaches for increasing affordable housing in Weston.

The Trust discussed the option of seeking CPA funding for the Trust as opposed for a specific project or program. Kenneth Newberg suggested that since the purpose of a trust is to be nimble and to be able to take quick action consistent with the Trust and the CPA's restrictions on use, that it made sense to him not to artificially restrict the Trust's use of funds given the difficulty and slowness of going through Town Meeting for every time-sensitive opportunity and potentially missing opportunities in the process. Sarah Rhatigan suggested taking a more traditional approach and requesting funding for specific projects and programs which may be more readily accepted by Town Meeting.

The Trust then decided to go forward and discuss particular programs that it would like to see funded.

The Purchase Option Proposal, that is, purchasing an option on a property, conducting pre-development work, and finding a mixed-income development partner to finish the development within a 10 to 20 unit rental project was determined to be financially uneconomical. Rental properties need to be significantly larger, perhaps in the ballpark of 150 units or greater, to be economically viable.

The Trust was initially focused on rental units because of the greater need for rentals within the Commonwealth, however, given the economic constraints on small developments, the Trust decided to pivot toward an ownership model.

The "Habitat for Humanity" option, that is, purchasing land and donating the land to a non-profit developer of 100% affordable ownership units, was next discussed and received broad support.

Sarah Rhatigan with the help of Liz Valenta would draft a proposed CPA Funding Request application consistent with the wishes of the Trust.

IV. Action Plan Strategies / Objectives - General Action Plan

This bullet item was deferred to the next scheduled meeting.

V. Discuss Town Annual Report

This bullet item was defeated to the next scheduled meeting.

VI. Approve December 12, 2016 Minutes

This bullet item was differed to the next scheduled meeting.

Adjournment; Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for January 12, 2017.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth A. Newberg
Clerk *pro tempore*